

Father ever could have done; no unequivocal statement to support that argument can be found, and certainly not one of any length such as a paragraph three or four sentences long.

Only Tertullian suggested that the immoral, licentious army life might be a problem to Christians in it, but it was not a major problem, judging from the silence of the rest of the church writers.

Although not every Father opposed military service explicitly or implicitly, those who did based their reasons not on ethical but on religious grounds. Tertullian found the religious observances of army men, official and unofficial, offensive to the extent that he devoted an entire treatise to that subject. Origen never mentioned army religion but objected to pledging allegiance to the emperor, and declined to let Christians fight, because their role was to carry on spiritual warfare, prayer in particular. In arguing that Christians were set apart, like Roman priests, he may have been thinking of the Old Testament priesthood. Probably the Old Testament influenced Cyprian too, but in his view of sacrificial purity, this purity was destroyed by shedding blood and touching a corpse, if the attack was successful. Although Hippolytus prohibited soldiers from executing people, he did not demand that they should leave the army; most likely his injunction applied to duties not involved in combat or normal military life.

By no means does the material presented in this chapter account for all the existing evidence relating to the early Christian experience with the Roman military. If the disapproval of military service ranged from utter disgust to a preference that Christians not join the army, the Church Fathers did not succeed in dissuading them from the military. Christian military tombstones, military martyr acts, and even the Fathers' scolding of Christians in uniform, show that they did not change the minds of some laymen, though they may have. The Apocryphal Gospels illustrate how the Fathers did not speak for everyone, at least not for Christians in the army. Moreover, in the reign of Constantine there is surprisingly little controversy over military service; if the Fathers were influential we should expect to find more, but this situation belongs to a succeeding chapter. Since the Fathers are only a part of the early church encounter with the army, the task remains to see what happened to Christians in the army, before and during the reign of Constantine.

III. Christians in the Roman Army from A.D. 173—312

In the preceding chapter the evidence, both explicitly and implicitly, pointed to the presence of Christians in the Roman army. We found that Tertullian, for example, explicitly stated that there were Christians in its ranks and that even the 'De corona' was inspired by an actual situation of which he claimed to have knowledge. Implicitly, injunctions against enlisting,

or remaining in the army after conversion, pointed to the actuality and possibility of Christians in service. This chapter continues the story by describing the experiences of some Christians in the army. Examining their army careers, we shall show that the problems Christians had were religious (as Origen, Tertullian and Hippolytus show), not moral in nature. No Christian refused to serve or was punished on the grounds that he refused to kill or to enter combat. The evidence will show, however, that some Christians served in the army without encountering difficulty. In this respect the evidence indicates that Christians of the first three centuries were not of one mind concerning the problem of military service; in fact, some may not have viewed their military careers as problematic at all.

By its nature, the evidence presented in this chapter falls into three sorts, each with its unique problems. First, the histories of Eusebius and Lactantius, although biased apologetically, place some of the accounts of Christian soldiers in the framework of ecclesiastical history. Second, martyr accounts of executed Christian soldiers tend to be embellished and inaccurate. Nevertheless, they offer a picture of how some Christians ran afoul of the military, despite the difficulties entailed in sundering historical fact from hagiographical improvisation. And third, inscriptions, while historically more reliable, do not tell us much beyond the bare necessities — rank, legion, and infrequently, the date of death.

1. *Legio XII Fulminata* — The Thundering Legion

By far one of the most interesting events from the second century is the story of the Thundering Legion. That the incident was reported by both Roman and Christian sources serves to strengthen the argument that the accounts are authentic. Based on the testimony of Apollinaris of Hierapolis who wrote about the Thundering Legion about two or three years after the rainstorm incident, Eusebius' 'Church History' retold the story²⁰⁸. Under

²⁰⁸ HE V, 4, 3—5, 7: ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἐπ' Ἀντωνίνου τοιαῦτα. 5, 1. Τούτου δὴ ἀδελφὸν Μάρκον Αὐρήλιον Καίσαρα λόγος ἔχει Γερμανοῖς καὶ Σαρμάταις ἀντιπαραταπτόμενον μάχη, δίψει πιεζομένης αὐτοῦ τῆς στρατιᾶς, ἐν ἀμηχανίᾳ γενέσθαι· τοὺς δ' ἐπὶ τῆς Μελιτηνῆς οὕτω καλουμένης λεγεῶνος στρατιώτας διὰ πίστεως ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ εἰς δεῦρο συνεστῶσης ἐν τῇ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους παρατάξει γόνου θέντας ἐπὶ γῆν κατὰ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἡμῖν τῶν εὐχῶν ἔθος ἐπὶ τὰς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἰκεσίας τραπέσθαι, 2. παραδόξου δὲ τοῖς πολεμίους τοῦ τοιοῦτου δὴ θεάματος φανέντος, ἄλλο τι λόγος ἔχει παραδοξότερον ἐπικαταλαβεῖν αὐτίκα, σκηπτὸν μὲν εἰς φυγὴν καὶ ἀπώλειαν συνελαύνοντα τοὺς πολεμίους, ὄμβρον δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν τὸ θεῖον παρακεκληκῶτων στρατιάν, πᾶσαν αὐτὴν ἐκ τοῦ δίψου μέλλουσαν ὅσον οὕτω διαφθεῖρεσθαι ἀνακτώμενον.

3. Ἡ δ' ἱστορία φέρεται μὲν καὶ παρὰ τοῖς πόρρω τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγου συγγραφεῦσιν οἷς μέλον γέγονεν τῆς κατὰ τοὺς δηλουμένους γραφῆς, δεδήλωται δὲ καὶ πρὸς τῶν ἡμετέρων. ἀλλὰ τοῖς μὲν ἔξωθεν ἱστορικοῖς, ἅτε τῆς πίστεως ἀνοικείοις, τέθειται μὲν τὸ παράδοξον, οὐ μὴν καὶ ταῖς τῶν ἡμετέρων εὐχαῖς τοῦθ' ὠμολογήθη γεγονέναι· τοῖς δὲ γε ἡμετέροις, ἅτε ἀληθείας φίλοις, ἀπλῶ καὶ ἀκακοήθει τρόπῳ τὸ πραχθὲν παραδέδοται. 4. τούτων δ' ἂν εἴη καὶ Ἀπολιναρίου, ἐξ ἐκείνου φήσας τὴν δι' εὐχῆς τὸ παράδοξον πεποιοηκυῖαν λεγεῶνα

the personal command of Marcus Aurelius, this legion was fighting the Germans and Sarmatians near the Danube when the soldiers depleted their water supply and were dangerously weakened by thirst. Christian soldiers in the legion then fell to their knees and prayed for deliverance. In answer to their prayers, a thunderstorm refreshed the legion and lightning bolts put the enemy to flight.

Eusebius was aware that there were other versions of the same incident in non-Christian authors, notably Cassius Dio, who related the circum-

οίκειαν τῷ γεγονότι πρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως εἰληφέναι προσηγορίαν, κεραυνοβόλον τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἐπικληθεῖσαν φωνῇ. 5. μάρτυς δὲ τούτων γένοιτ' ἂν ἀξιοχρεῶς ὁ Τερτυλλιανός, τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν τῇ συγκλήτῳ προσφωνήσας ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ἀπολογίαν, ἧς καὶ πρόσθεν ἐμνημονεύσαμεν, τὴν τε ἱστορίαν βεβαιῶν σὺν ἀποδείξει μείζονι καὶ ἐναργεστέρῃ· 6. γράφει δ' οὖν καὶ αὐτός, λέγων Μάρκου τοῦ συνετωτάτου βασιλέως ἐπιστολὰς εἰς ἔτι νῦν φέρεσθαι ἐν αἷς αὐτὸς μαρτυρεῖ ἐν Γερμανίᾳ ὕδατος ἀπορία μέλλοντα αὐτοῦ τὸν στρατὸν διαφθεῖρεσθαι ταῖς τῶν Χριστιανῶν εὐχαῖς σεσῶσθαι, τοῦτον δὲ φησὶν καὶ θάνατον ἀπειλήσει τοῖς κατηγορεῖν ἡμῶν ἐπιχειροῦσιν· οἷς ὁ δηλωθεὶς ἀνὴρ καὶ ταῦτα προσεπιλέγει· 7. "ποταποὶ οὖν οἱ νόμοι οὔτοι, οὐς καθ' ἡμῶν μόνων ἔπονται ἀσεβεῖς ἄδικοι ὡμοί· οὐς οὔτε Οὔεσπασιανὸς ἐφύλαξεν, καίτοι γε Ἰουδαίους νικήσας, οὐς Τραϊανὸς ἐκ μέρους ἐξουθένησεν, κωλύων ἐκζητηθεῖσαι Χριστιανούς, οὐς οὔτε Ἀδριανός, καίτοι γε πάντα τὰ περιέργα πολυπραγμονῶν, οὔτε ὁ Εὐσεβῆς ἐπικληθεὶς ἐπεκύρωσεν." ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὅπη τις ἐθέλοι, τιθέσθω· μετῴμεν δ' ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν ἐξῆς ἀκολουθίαν.

("Such were the events which happened under Antoninus. 5. It is said that when his brother, Marcus Aurelius Caesar, was engaging in battle with the Germans and Sarmatians, he was in difficulties, because his army was oppressed by thirst; but the soldiers of the legion which is called after Melitene, knelt on the ground according to our own custom of prayer, in the faith which has sustained them from that time to this in their contests with their enemies, and turned towards supplications to God. Now though this kind of spectacle seemed strange to the enemy, the story goes that another still more marvellous overcame them at once, for lightning drove the enemy to flight and destruction, and a shower falling on the army which had prayed to God, refreshed them all when they were on the point of destruction from thirst. The story is both told among writers who are foreign to our faith who have undertaken to write of the times of the above mentioned emperors, and has also been recorded by Christians. By the heathen writers, inasmuch as they were strangers to the faith, the miracle is related, but it was not confessed that it happened through the prayers of the Christians; but in our own writers, inasmuch as they are the friends of truth, what happened has been described in a simple and harmless fashion. Among these would be also Apolinarius, who states that after that time the legion which had wrought the miracle through prayer had received a name from the emperor appropriate to what had happened, and was called in Latin the "Thundering Legion". Tertullian is also a worthy witness of these things, who in addressing in Latin an apology for our faith to the Senate, which we have quoted already, confirmed the story with more and clearer proof. In his writing he says that letters of Marcus, the most prudent emperor, were still extant, in which he testifies himself that when his army was on the point of destruction in Germany from lack of water it had been saved by the prayers of the Christians, and Tertullian says that the emperor also threatened death to those who attempted to accuse us. The author goes on as follows: 'What kind of laws are these which wicked, unrighteous, and cruel men use against us alone? Vespasian did not observe them although he conquered the Jews. Trajan partially allowed them, but forbade Christians to be sought out. Neither Hadrian, though busy in all curious matters, nor Pius, as he is called, ratified them.' But let these things be as anyone will, we must pass on to the train of further events." Trans. by KIRSOPP LAKE [London-Cambridge, Mass., 1964].)

stances in greater detail²⁰⁹. In the heat of summer a numerically superior enemy (the Quadi) surrounded the Romans and kept them from reaching water. While the soldiers remained at their posts becoming increasingly dehydrated, the Quadi prepared for battle. Then the thunderstorm came, summoned by the power of Arnuphis, an Egyptian magician in the company of Marcus²¹⁰. The Romans were so busy drinking that the enemy would still have had the upper hand had it not been for the accompanying lightning and hail preventing the Quadi from pressing their advantage. Revived, the Romans fought back so fiercely that they simultaneously drank rain from the clouds and blood from the enemy. For the resulting victory, Dio tells us that Marcus was acclaimed *imperator* for the seventh time and that his wife Faustina was from then on known as the 'Mother of the Camp'²¹¹.

In Dio's narrative we find the interpolation of an eleventh-century writer, Johannes Xiphilinus, who felt that Dio intentionally gave the credit for the unexpected victory to Arnuphis rather than the Christians²¹². Xiphilinus argued that Marcus, as a good Roman, would never have anything to do with a magician and that there were many Christians in that legion since it was from Melitene. Moreover, Marcus favored Christians, for he wrote a letter crediting them with the victory and sent it to the Roman senate. Further Xiphilinus repeated Apollinaris' statement (as did Eusebius) that the emperor had named the legion 'the Thundering Legion' out of gratitude for the Christians' role in conquering the Quadi.

Where Tertullian became aware of the letter of Marcus to the senate is not clear; he was, however, able to sketch the story of the rainstorm, but does not do it in detail²¹³. Wherever Tertullian got his information, it was not the same source as that of Apollinaris; HARNACK thought that these two writers were completely independent of each other²¹⁴. The letter contains Marcus' aversion, as a result of his experience in the rainstorm, to any person bringing charges against the Christians. As such, Tertullian used the letter, along with the rescript of Trajan, to convince Romans that legal precedent prohibited them from searching for Christians²¹⁵.

²⁰⁹ Dio LXXII, 8, 1—10. 5.

²¹⁰ Arnuphis is known from other sources. J. GUEY, in his article, 'Encore la pluie miraculeuse', *Revue de Philologie*, XXII (1948), 16—62, thought that Dio was offended at Arnuphis' presence in Marcus' army, since, as the inscription stated, he was a *hierogrammateus* and all such people were magicians. Marcus probably met him in 167 when the plague ravaged the empire and, because these people were healers, Marcus got help from him (pp. 29—30). The inscription reads: Ἀρνούφης ἱερογραμματεὺς τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ τερεντὸν πρῆστοκος θεὰ ἐπιφάνει (*L'année Epigraphique*, 1934, no. 245, p. 64).

²¹¹ In the papyri from Dura (*Feriale Duranum*, p. 157) Faustina, meaning either the wife of Antoninus Pius or Marcus, has her birthday celebrated in the military festivals. An inscription shows Faustina, wife of Marcus, as *Mater Castororum* (CIL XIV, 40).

²¹² Dio LXXII, 9, 1—6.

²¹³ Apology 5.

²¹⁴ ADOLF HARNACK, *Die Quelle der Berichte über das Regenwunder im Feldzuge Marc Aurel's gegen die Quaden*, *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, XXXVI, 2 (1894), 835—882, p. 842.

²¹⁵ See Pliny, *Epistles* X, 97—98.

Undoubtedly a forgery, the letter of Marcus Aurelius to the senate originated at the earliest from the first part of the fourth century²¹⁶. HARNACK has shown that part of the letter owes its inspiration to Galerius' edict of toleration in 311²¹⁷. Probably this letter was written after its author heard that such a letter existed; possibly he read Tertullian or Dio or both²¹⁸.

Finally, the column of Marcus Aurelius, erected shortly after 176, is the last source originating from antiquity that bears information relating to the rainstorm²¹⁹. The scene depicting the incident does not picture any lightning bolts; it merely has rain coming down from the outstretched arms of Jupiter Pluvius. However, two scenes before the rainstorm representation there appears a lightning bolt demolishing an enemy siege tower²²⁰. This thunderbolt is credited to the prayer of Marcus himself shown praying on bended knee and protected by his soldiers. In the 'Augustan History', a document of the late fourth century, the rainstorm scene and the lightning bolt scene are presented as one event. "By his prayers he summoned a thunderbolt from heaven against a war-engine of the enemy, and successfully besought rain for his men who were suffering from thirst"²²¹. The confusion

²¹⁶ The text of this letter is found in J. B. LIGHTFOOT, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London, 1885) Part II Vol. I, 469—476.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 865. RUDOLF FREUDENBERGER further argues that if the letter had been known to Eusebius, he would have used it. The forger must have found or known the original letter, but a reading of Dio's account would have told him that. See RUDOLF FREUDENBERGER, *Ein angeblicher Christenbrief Marc Aurels*, *Historia*, XVII (1968), 251—256.

²¹⁸ That Marcus could have sent a letter extolling the virtues of the Christians to the senate is inconceivable, for many of the remarks favorable to Christians in it blatantly contradict what we know of Marcus elsewhere. Although he is alleged in the letter to have credited Christians with saving the legion, in the 'Meditations' (III, 16) he accuses them, as did Celsus, of failing the empire "in its time of need". Three years after the letter is said to have been written, Marcus permitted the wholesale persecution in Lyons-Vienne to take place (HE V, 1, 47; the year was 177). The theme that the accusers of Christians are to be punished (a prominent point of Marcus' letter) appears in another forged document ascribed to the time of Antoninus Pius, the 'Letter to the Commune Asiae' (LIGHTFOOT, pp. 465—469).

²¹⁹ GIOVANNI BECATTI, *Colonna di Marco Aurelio* (Milan, 1957), plates 9, 10, 11 and 12. The column of Marcus has received considerable attention in relationship to the rainstorm. A. VON DOMASZEWSKI thought that the Christian account must be inauthentic since Christians place it at the end of the war on the Danube, but the column puts it at the beginning. A. VON DOMASZEWSKI, *Das Regenwunder der Marc Aurel-Säule*, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, XLIV (1894), 612—619. WILHELM ZWIKKER argues that the most reliable source for the date is the 'Chronicle' of Eusebius and therefore places the rainstorm in late 172 or early 173. See WILHELM ZWIKKER, *Studien zur Marcussäule* (Amsterdam, 1941), pp. 206—226. JOHN MORRIS held that the assumption of the title *imperator VII* on the part of Marcus, dated by coins in the second half of 174, is the decisive event placing the rainstorm shortly before that time, probably June, 174. See JOHN MORRIS *The Dating of the Column of Marcus Aurelius*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XV (1952), 37—40.

²²⁰ BECATTI, plate 9.

²²¹ *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Marcus Antoninus 24, 4 (Loeb). — C. H. DODD lists a coin with Jupiter throwing a thunderbolt; there is a figure kneeling, holding in the right hand a thunderbolt and in the left a spear. The obverse has M. ANTONINVS AVG. TR. P. XXVII. C. H. DODD, *Chronology of the Danubian Wars of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus*,

of these two separate incidents in the 'Augustan History' illustrates some of the problems in studying Marcus' column. If the scenes on the column are arranged chronologically, when do they begin and when do they end? Are they spaced at regular intervals or do they correspond to significant incidents within the reign of Marcus? Or is the arrangement random?

This is the nature and content of the most reliable sources for the rainstorm incident; it now remains to offer a reconstruction of the event as these sources permit.

What is the relationship of the *legio XII Fulminata* to the victory of Marcus? Only Christian sources mention that this legion participated in the battle while Dio and the column of Marcus do not explicitly mention the names of any legions. Since Apollinaris lived relatively close to the home camp of Thundering Legion and was a contemporary of the campaign against the Quadi, his testimony must be given close attention. Probably he would not have thought to connect a battle as distant as the Danube with Christian soldiers unless he had actually heard that story. Although the legion was permanently stationed in Melitene on the eastern frontier of the empire, there is epigraphical evidence that contingents of the legion were present in the Danube at that time, further supporting the testimony of Apollinaris²²². Not all Christian documents agree with him, however, for the spurious letter of Marcus mentioned the first and tenth legions, but without supplying their names; lacking these names we are faced with choosing from three first legions and two tenth legions²²³. Some of these legions were stationed closer to the scene of the battle than the Thundering Legion. But since this document was a forgery, it is likely that the writer took information which sounded more plausible to him. Thus it would appear that the *legio XII Fulminata* was to some extent involved in Marcus' victory²²⁴.

While Latin epigraphy supports Apollinaris' claim that the Twelfth legion was at that battle, the same evidence flatly contradicts his statement

Numismatic Chronicle, 4th Series, XIII (1913), 161—199 and 276—321. Since Marcus' twenty-seventh tribunician year was 10 December 172—9 December 173, presumably the destruction of the siege tower was in 172.

²²² RITTERLING, *Legio*, in: RE, XII, 2 (1925), 1705—1710. The *XII Fulminata* had been at the same location for about a century. In the tumult of the Jewish uprising in Jerusalem (66—70), it had lost its eagle. Ordinarily a legion losing its chief standard was disbanded in disgrace (if there was anything left to disband), but the Twelfth Legion was transferred to Melitene in Cappadocia.

In the Danubian conflict parts of other legions were pressed into battle, including a vexillation of *III Augusta*, normally stationed in North Africa, CIL, VIII, 619 = ILS, 2747.

²²³ "(T)he first legion and the tenth legion — both the Twin and the Fretensian . . ." (LIGHT-FOOT, p. 469). There were three legions at that time which carried the number I: *I Minervia* stationed in Germania Inferior; *I Adiutrix* stationed in Pannonia Superior; and *I Italica* stationed in Moesia Inferior. Both tenth legions are named: *X Gemina* from Pannonia Superior; and *X Fretensis* from Judaea. As entire legions, the presence of any of these is easily explained in the Danubian conflict, except *X Fretensis*, although a cohort from that legion could have been there as easily as a cohort from *XII Fulminata*.

²²⁴ CIL, VI, 3492 = ILS, 2288.

that the origin of the name 'Thundering' was Marcus' reward for prayers well said. The Roman word for the legion was *Fulminata* (a perfect passive participle), literally meaning thunderstruck, not thundering. As such, the appellation of that legion in inscriptions goes all the way back to the *imperator* Octavian²²⁵. RENAN conjectured that, since places struck by lightning were regarded with awe, the camp of the legion may have been electrified in that way, giving it the name *Fulminata*²²⁶.

Although Roman sources neglect to mention the legions involved, they are careful not to omit the deities to whom credit must be given. Dio contends that Arnuphis called upon the god Mercury. The writer of the forged letter to the senate was correct in noticing that Dio felt uneasy about giving Arnuphis full credit for the spectacular victory, for he mentioned that he was a magician; he therefore supplied a reference to the traditional Roman god Mercury²²⁷. The column of Marcus pictures Jupiter Pluvius causing rain to fall on the soldiers who received it with shields held so as to catch the water.

The unexpected, paradoxical (*paradoxos* in Dio) nature of the victory so impressed the Romans that they could not refrain from attributing it to divine auspices; neither could the Christians. Thus ensued a literary religious war, each side claiming the decisive deity. Apollinaris joined battle by including in his apology (intended to show how loyal the Christians were) the story about how Christians in the legion offered indispensable help. His apology contained the explicit argument that Christians were willing to pray for the victory; it also contained the implicit argument that Christians were loyal to the extent they would enlist. On what grounds could this implicit argument be supported? Stationed in Melitene, the metropolis of Cappadocia, the *legio XII Fulminata* drew on many able-bodied citizens to fill its ranks. More than half a century had passed since Trajan elevated the obscure army post to the rank of *municipium*, thereby conferring citizenship on everyone there, including Christians. After that time the settlement grew rapidly into the urban center about which Procopius wrote²²⁸. There were many Christians in the neighborhood, making it likely that Melitene would have its share²²⁹. As Eusebius reports, Apollinaris did not seem to have regretted that Christians served in the legion; in all likelihood, the Christians in that locality never felt any qualms about enlisting. If there

²²⁵ RITTERLING, *Legio*, p. 1706. CIL III, 504, 507, 509, 6097; V, 2520; IX, 435.

²²⁶ E. RENAN, *Marc-Aurèle et la Fin du Monde Antique*, 6th ed. (Paris, 1891), p. 275.

²²⁷ That Arnuphis was not related to Mercury is shown in the inscription; see above, note 210.

²²⁸ Procopius of Caesarea, *Buildings* III, 4, 15—20. The relationship between soldiers and citizens in the east was closer than in the west. The soldiers in Dura Europos were quartered inside the city walls. In Edessa the soldiers left camp for the warmth of the town during the winter months. See J. B. SEGAL, *Edessa, the Blessed City* (Oxford, 1970), p. 119. Close contacts between soldiers and civilians undoubtedly aided the spread of Christianity in the army.

²²⁹ F. VAN DER MEER and CHRISTINE MOHRMANN, *Atlas of the Early Christian World*, trans. and ed. by MARY HEDLUND and H. H. ROWLEY (London, 1958), plate 5.

were Christians in the Twelfth legion during Marcus' reign, one might assume that they had been enlisting in it before that time.

If HARNACK is correct in saying that Apollinaris wrote his apology before 175²³⁰, that would explain why he did not relate the legion to the unsuccessful revolt of Avidius Cassius beginning in April, 175²³¹. As we have seen above, p. 737, Tertullian, writing a generation later, made use of that fact²³². All the legions in the east supported Avidius' revolt against Marcus; only *XIII Fulminata* and *XV Apollinaris* remained loyal. For this Marcus bestowed on them honorific titles; the Twelfth legion was called *certa constans* ("always dependable"), and the Fifteenth became known as *pia fidelis* ("dutifully faithful"). Because the titles of these legions differ, RITTERLING conjectured that the Thundering Legion had done something special to put down Avidius' revolt. Since Avidius met his death at the hands of his own soldiers in July 175, RITTERLING wondered if the soldiers of the Twelfth legion did it, thereby deserving the special title²³³.

The role the legion played in the suppression of Avidius, however active it might have been, offers us an indisputable date to begin to determine the date of the rainstorm, although for our use a precise date is not imperative. To make sense, the title *certa constans* implies that the legion had to have returned from the Danubian campaign and was in its home camp at the time of Avidius' revolt and its suppression in July 175. Allowing for clean-up operations against the Quadi and the march back to Melitene, the latest date possible for the rainstorm would then be the summer of 174 — assuming there would not be time in the same summer for operations against both the Quadi and Avidius. On the basis of Dio's testimony, summer 174 appears to be the correct date because, consequent to his victory, the army saluted Marcus *imperator VII*, which is known to be 174 from other sources²³⁴. However, numismatic evidence suggests 173, since representations of the rainstorm appear on issues of that year²³⁵. In addition, the coins place the destruction of the siege tower slightly before the rainstorm, roughly in the same relationship as the scenes of those two events on Marcus' column. Dio's statement that the army saluted Marcus *imperator VII* may be interpreted to mean that, although the rainstorm victory took place in 173 and the army acclaimed Marcus shortly thereafter, it took the senate until early in 174 to ratify it. Therefore, the summer of 173 is the probable date of the rainstorm victory²³⁶.

²³⁰ HARNACK, p. 836.

²³¹ E. J. BICKERMAN, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (London, 1969), p. 240.

²³² Apology 5.

²³³ E. RITTERLING, *Epigraphische Beiträge zur Römischen Geschichte*, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, LIX (1904), 196—199. RITTERLING draws an analogy with the death of Maximin in 238 at the hands of his own soldiers (Herodian VIII, 8).

²³⁴ DODD, p. 282. ²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

²³⁶ These dates assume that the entire Twelfth Legion was called away from Melitene for the Danubian campaign. If, however, Marcus used only contingents of cohort strength, most of the legion could have been present to put down the uprising of Avidius while some of its members were still engaging the Quadi in the west.

Briefly to recapitulate these findings, it appears that Christians had enlisted in the *XII Fulminata* and took part in its campaigns. Not until 320 do we have any indication that Christians in that legion had conflicts with its officers (the account of the forty martyrs of Sabaste from that legion under Licinius in 320 is dubious at best; see below, p. 812). Apollinaris, Tertullian and Eusebius tell the story without the slightest hint that these soldiers were wrong in joining that legion, or for remaining in it if they were converted while serving. All three churchmen recount the story to prove to Romans that Christians did their part in defending the empire. Since it is difficult to imagine Christians appearing all of a sudden with Marcus on the Danube, Christian participation in the army at Melitene must have taken place long before 173. Unfortunately the evidence does not permit us to elaborate this conclusion.

During the three generations following the incident of the Thundering Legion, little comes to light concerning Christians in the Roman army. In the reign of Alexander Severus (222—235) there appeared an enigmatic Christian author, perhaps an officer, who wrote on subjects both Christian and military²³⁷. His military writing is particularly interesting for it covered subjects such as how to keep soldiers²³⁸ and horses²³⁹ from getting sick, how to use elephants²⁴⁰ in battle, how to defend against a sword thrust from above²⁴¹, how to make a spontaneously igniting mixture of sulphur and phosphorus²⁴² — probably the first reference to what was to become the dreaded 'Greek fire' of the Middle Ages. Cyprian's uncles Egnatius and Laurentius may have been soldiers and may have died in conflict with the army. Present at Cyprian's execution in 258 was a Christian *tesserarius* (in charge of giving the password to the guards during the night watch) who exchanged dry clothes for Cyprian's sweaty ones²⁴³. Besas became a Christian at a trial of another Christian which quickly became his own trial²⁴⁴. Decius' persecution did not produce any martyrs in the army, though it might well have had not Decius' life been cut short.

²³⁷ U. TREU, *Julius Africanus*, RGG, III (1959), 1063. The only evidence that Julius was an officer is the martial subject matter in the *Kestoi*.

²³⁸ J. VIELLEFOND, *Jules Afr* fragments des *Cestes* (Paris, 1932), p. 59.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62. CADOUX representative of

he was only nominated what he wanted

²⁴³ A. HARNACK, 16, 6. The p

²⁴⁴ This account

by Dion
the even
bystand
of God,
C. ANDR
Eusebiu
(ANRW

pp. 206—207) objects to Africanus being considered
he also advocated poisoning food, wine, and wells;
In saying that, however, CADOUX showed that he knew
looked at the evidence.

ni, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, XIII (Berlin, 1913),
e was to gain Cyprian's clothes for a relic.

Eusebius (HE VI, 41, 16), who reproduced a letter written
a, to Fabius, bishop of Antioch. In it Dionysius tells of
on (250) in Alexandria. Besas was a soldier who opposed
their way to execution. Urged to become a warrior
and shared the fate of those whom he was guarding. Cf.
" im Aufstieg des Christentums. *Untersuchungen zu*
ysios von Alexandrien, above in this same volume,

2. Marinus — Officer Candidate

Marinus has the dubious distinction of being the first martyred Christian soldier of whom we know anything in detail. His death occurred around 260 if the position it holds in the narrative of Eusebius is chronological²⁴⁵. The trial took place before the judge Achaeus at Caesarea in Palestine. Since the events before and after the story of Marinus took place in the reign of Gallienus, LAWLOR and OULTON are probably correct in placing it in 261²⁴⁶.

Marinus was about to receive his promotion to the rank of centurion when another soldier objected on the ground that Marinus was a Christian. As such Marinus would not be able to sacrifice to the gods and, since the centurion was under obligation to perform these rites in the absence of a superior officer, the objection was brought to the attention of a judge. Marinus' rank in the service indicates that he must have been a good soldier since he had worked himself up to the position of *optio ad spem*, the rank just before promotion to centurion²⁴⁷. There were various ranks below centurion called *principales*, comparable to technical sergeants in the U. S. Army. Since Marinus had worked his way up in the ranks it is certain that he had enlisted.

Since Marinus did not inform anyone that he was a Christian, it would appear that he intended to remain in service. The soldier who accused him probably was the next in line for the post, and very likely jealous. (Accusing a person of being a Christian was sometimes an efficient method of removing competition.) Even after the accusation had been made, it was not clear in Marinus' mind whether to renounce Christianity, at least to the satisfaction of the officials, and advance to centurion, or to admit his religious convictions and renounce his life. Only after a meeting with bishop Theotecnus of Caesarea in Palestine did Marinus choose to die for his faith. The bishop held out to him a sword and a Bible; Marinus took the latter.

3. The Theban Legion

According to the most reliable text, the story of the Theban legion is this²⁴⁸. On the march (in 286) to the neighborhood of present-day Geneva,

²⁴⁵ HE VII, 15. HERBERT MUSURILLO, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 240—243.

²⁴⁶ H. J. LAWLOR and J. E. L. OULTON, *Eusebius* (London, 1927), I, 229.

²⁴⁷ WATSON, *The Roman Soldier* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1969), p. 79. Since Marinus was heading for the rank of centurion, he was not an equestrian; equestrians started out at the rank of centurion and progressed from there to higher office in both military and civilian branches of public service. Eusebius gave the impression that Marinus was special in rank and birth, but his position in the military does not agree with that judgment.

MUSURILLO (p. 241) notes that Marinus was likely a soldier in the *legio X Fretensis* and that the judge, Achaeus, was *legatus* of Syria and Palestine in 260.

²⁴⁸ *Passio Acaunensium Martyrum*, in: DENIS VAN BERCHEM, *Le Martyre de la légion Thébaine* (Basel, 1956), pp. 55—59. Also LOUIS DUPRAZ, *Les passions de S. Maurice d'Agaune* (Fribourg, 1961), Appendix I, pp. 1—4.

Switzerland, the army of Maximian became tired crossing the mountains and camped at Octodurum. Of this army one contingent withdrew to Acaunus and made its camp there. Word reached Maximian that the forces at Acaunus had revolted, since they had refused to offer sacrifice to the gods. He immediately went to that camp and ordered them beaten and decimated. After this punishment the survivors still refused to sacrifice, whereupon Maximian ordered them decimated a second time, but had no more success in changing their minds. In reply, the soldiers said that they were loyal, because they obeyed all lawful orders of the emperor and would never consider opposing him with swords. However, the orders issued were unlawful since they commanded them to kill Bagaudae who were Christian, and it was for these people they were supposed to fight, not against them. Moreover, the soldiers said that they were good soldiers since they took their wages for fighting all enemies of innocent, pious, and just people, but killing Christian comrades, both in and out of the army, was an impossible task. Since the Christian soldiers recently killed had gone to their heavenly reward for their martyrdoms, there was no need to lament their deaths. Then the soldiers took off their weapons and armor, and Maximian ordered them all killed. While this was being done, a veteran by the name of Victor wandered along; he felt the need to confess that he too was Christian and immediately died as a result. In all, 6600 men were said to have died for resisting Maximian.

Recent scholarship has been critical of this account for many valid reasons; nobody believes it as it stands but most historians think there is an historical basis to it and have worked to uncover it. While the events surrounding the Thundering legion appeared in both Christian and non-Christian sources, the alleged martyrdom of the Theban legion appears only in the documents of the church, with the first account (that of Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, 428—450) written over a century and a half later. It is inconceivable that the execution of an entire legion, unprecedented in Roman military history, would have escaped notice in non-Christian sources entirely, and in contemporary Christian sources such as Lactantius and Eusebius. Although the number of 6600 represents the full strength of a legion, such a number reminds one more of a textbook of Roman military science (Vegetius in particular)²⁴⁹ than the roster of an actual legion.

Two features of this narrative point to a date of composition considerably later than the campaign against the Bagaudae in 286. First, the text contains the names of three martyrs along with their military titles: Mauritius, a *primicerius*; Exuperius, a *campidoctor*; and Candidus, a *senator militum*. Of these three titles the earliest to appear on records from antiquity is *senator militum*, in 359²⁵⁰. Another incriminating fact is that all

²⁴⁹ VAN BERCHEM, p. 32. DUPRAZ contends that there was a vexillation of exactly 1000 men, named Theban, of which 682 men died at Acaunus and 318 men died later at Cologne. Once again, the round number is not credible, and, moreover, the deaths of 1000 men unnoticed by contemporary sources is too much to be believed. DUPRAZ, pp. 204—240.

²⁵⁰ ROBERT GROSSE, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 120—127.

these titles belong to the cavalry, while the story itself describes infantry soldiers²⁵¹; cavalry was not widely used until after the time of Constantine. The second anachronism is that there was no Theban legion in 286; certainly there was no province of Thebes until 295, nine years later²⁵². However, after 295 there were two legions which referred to Thebes in their titles known from the 'Notitia Dignitatum': the *legio II Flavia Constantia Thebaeorum* and the *legio II Felix Valentis Thebaeorum*²⁵³. While these two anachronisms point to a date of composition later than 286, a third refers to a time considerably before 286: by this time the penalty of decimation had been abandoned as a disciplinary measure; it held its greatest terrors during the Republican period, when it was used frequently²⁵⁴.

In addition to the chronological problems of this account, there are reasons for arguing that the site of the event was not in Acaunus but in some eastern province of the empire. To begin with, the story wants us to believe that Maximian was a more dreadful foe of Christianity than what we know of him through more reliable accounts²⁵⁵. VAN BERCHEM points out that the names of two deadly persecutors were also Maximian: Galerius' full name was C. Valerius Maximianus²⁵⁶. (Maximian was Diocletian's colleague who was the Augustus in the west in 286; Galerius and Maximin Daia were Caesars in the east, Galerius taking office in 293.) Moreover, the Bagaudae were not Christians even though the story tells us that the soldiers refused to attack them on that ground; there were no Christians in that place²⁵⁷. Another geographical problem is the mileage given between Acaunus and Octodurus, where Maximian heard that the Theban Legion had revolted; the text specifies sixty Roman miles (= fifty-five English miles). Actually the distance between the two points was about ten miles²⁵⁸. On the basis of both chronological and geographical contradictions, VAN BERCHEM argues for a later date and an eastern locality, probably under either Galerius or Maximin Daia. Although the evidence does not permit greater accuracy, he is probably right that the locality of the massacre was in the east, although it certainly did not involve a whole legion.

Since this account has been proven to be troublesome, any use of it as evidence for showing the relationship between Christians and the army must be tentative. Because the date of 286 has been proven unreliable, the only other means of assigning a date to the narrative is to use the date of the

²⁵¹ VAN BERCHEM, pp. 32—33.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁵⁴ FIEBIGER, *Decimatio*, in: *RE*, IV, 2 (1901), 2272. For example, in 218 the emperor Macrinus had decreased its severity to *centesimatio*, exactly one-tenth as severe as *decimatio*.

²⁵⁵ After 304 there were no martyrs known in Maximian's part of the empire; it is likely that he did not pursue the persecutions as rigorously in the west as Diocletian did in the east. R. M. GRANT, *From Augustus to Constantine*, p. 231.

²⁵⁶ VAN BERCHEM, p. 26.

²⁵⁷ The reason for the campaign was that, upset by heavy taxes, the Bagaudae revolted and became robbers. H. MATTINGLY, *The Imperial Recovery*, *CAH*, XII (1939), p. 327.

²⁵⁸ VAN BERCHEM, p. 4.

foundation of Thebes as a province (295) for a terminus a quo. The demand that the soldiers sacrifice (as will appear later in this chapter) is compatible with the situation for Christians in the army during the Great Persecution. It is conceivable, though not demonstrable, that the persecution in the army in the east produced Christian martyrs in sufficient numbers to make it appear that in fact a decimation had taken place. Judging from Eusebius' eyewitness account of the persecution in Egypt, Christian casualties were high²⁵⁹.

4. Maximilian — The Recruit

The troublesome nature of the unreliable account of the Theban legion is more than offset by the unquestioned 'Acts of Maximilian'²⁶⁰. On March 12, 295, in Thevaste, in the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, Fabius Victor, a *temonarius*, led his son, Maximilian, into the court of Cassius Dio²⁶¹. Maximilian refused to tell Dio his name and refused to serve in the army because he was a Christian. Continuing the recruitment proceedings, Dio ordered Maximilian to be measured, armed, and to wear the lead seal (*signaculum*) hung from his neck²⁶². Maximilian continued to object, arguing further that he could not fight in an earthly army because he considered himself a soldier of God. If he did not comply, Dio promised to send him to Christ, but Maximilian said that if the seal were hung around his neck he would break it, since it was meaningless to him.

Warning him to respect his youth, Dio further argued that there were Christians who served in the sacred company of the emperors (*in sacro comitatu*). In its implications, Dio's statement is significant because it shows that there were a number of Christians in the presence of the emperor, that they were known as such, and that they apparently did not suffer on that

²⁵⁹ HE VIII, 9—10. In particular he mentions the Thebans (HE VIII, 9, 1).

²⁶⁰ GUSTAV KRÜGER and GERHARD RUIBACH, *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten*, 4th ed. (Tübingen, 1965), pp. 86—87. MUSURILLO, pp. 244—249.

²⁶¹ We are able to obtain an exact date from the reference, *Tusco et Anulino consulibus IV id Marti Tevasti*. The consular year of Tuscus and Anulinus was 295. BICKERMANN, *Chronology*, p. 191. Since the civil and military administrations were not separated in this province at this time, the court mentioned was a military court. See PARKER, *History* (above, note 68), p. 263; and J. G. C. ANDERSON, *The Genius of Diocletian's Provincial Reorganization*, JRS, XXII (1932), 24—32. Cassius Dio (his praenomen is not in the text) held the rank of proconsul and, since he was presiding in a military trial, was the governor of this province. He was consul in 291 and *praefectus urbi Romae* in 296.

²⁶² In this account we possess a record of induction into the Roman army including measuring, equipping, and the recitation of the *sacramentum*. In addition, there is a reference to the *signaculum*, a lead seal with the image of the emperor or an inscription dedicated to him struck on it, perhaps both. See FRANZ DÖLGER, *Sacramentum Militiae*, *Antike und Christentum*, II (1930), 268—280. The reference to *signetur* ("let him be branded") denotes a time when it was no longer an honor to be in the army. To more easily recognize the deserters, recruits were branded. In earlier times such a mark, made either by branding or tattoo, would have been an offense to the dignity of the soldier. See WATSON, pp. 50—51.

account. Such a force as the *comitatus* was very important, since it was made up of the mobile troops under the emperor's direct command²⁶³. We know of Christians who were martyred under Diocletian and who were probably in the *comitatus*, however. These are the Four Crowned Martyrs whose tomb was discovered in the immediate vicinity of Diocletian's palace at Saloniae, modern day Split, Yugoslavia²⁶⁴. It is not known whether the Christians present at the liver reading incident, reported by Lactantius, were in this branch of the service, though it is likely. Whatever the status of Christians in the imperial palace at that time might have been, Maximilian was not at all impressed by their position. He said that those in the emperor's bodyguard did what was best for them; but he must remain true to his principles. Some were able to serve with a clear conscience and some were not.

Finally Dio decided that Maximilian's name should be erased from the roll call and that he should suffer death by the sword as an example to others entertaining ideas of despising the service.

Certainly Maximilian was unwilling to serve but was unable to avoid the conflict since he was drafted; he is the only known Christian draftee. Maximilian's father held the position of *temonarius*, which demanded that he either furnish a recruit for the army or collect a payment of money instead²⁶⁵. Organized along the lines of the land tax, Diocletian's recruitment system was designed to supply the army with fresh manpower in an age when, as we have seen with the branding of recruits, military service was becoming unpopular. Voluntary recruitment could no longer satisfy the army's demands for personnel. The *temonarius* was elected by consortia comprising small groups of landowners; each consortium was responsible for one recruit to be chosen by the *temonarius* during his temporary term of office. Apparently unable to find another man's son, Victor brought his own²⁶⁶.

W. SESTON put forward the thesis that 'idolatrous objects' were the reason for the cluster of military martyrdoms in the time of Diocletian²⁶⁷. In the case of Maximilian he called attention to the rejection of the lead seal and its connection with the emperor. Early in the empire the emperor was considered divine, but only after his death and at the vote of the senate;

²⁶³ A. H. M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1964), p. 52.

²⁶⁴ EINAR DYGGVE, *A History of Salonetan Christianity* (Oslo, 1951), p. 74.

²⁶⁵ JONES, p. 615.

²⁶⁶ HARNACK (*Militia Christi*, p. 84) is incorrect when he states that Victor was a veteran who was required to bring his son to the army. While it is true that sons of veterans were automatically enlisted (*Codex Theodosianus*, VIII, *passim*), the capitation system of raising money and recruits was designed to supply what the army could no longer provide by enlisting its own sons. Nor is it true that Victor remained in the army after the execution of his son. If Victor was a veteran, as HARNACK asserts, he would, by definition, be out of the army, even though liable to being called back in times of emergency.

²⁶⁷ W. SESTON, *A propos de la Passio Marcelli Centurionis. Remarques sur les origines de la persécution de Dioclétien*, *Mélanges M. Goguel* (Neuchâtel, 1950), pp. 239—246.

Heliogabalus and Aurelian, however, had identified themselves with the unconquered sun. But SESTON found Diocletian and Maximian unique in identifying themselves with deities, a finding which seems arbitrary in light of the practices of previous emperors. In 286 Diocletian designated himself Jovius, divine earthly representative of Jupiter, and designated Maximian as his 'brother' Herculus, the representative of Hercules²⁶⁸. They divided the empire and chose subordinates, Galerius and Constantius respectively, to be 'sons' in the divine earthly family. Given the divine earthly family, SESTON argued, each representation of them, such as the lead seal, would be an idol in the eyes of the Christians. However, it would seem that Maximilian had made up his mind not to become a soldier long before Dio commanded him to wear the lead seal; the seal never became an object of discussion between them. The most objectionable feature of the military was the *sacramentum*: Maximilian stated from the beginning that he was already committed to Christ's army and could not join an earthly one; he had taken an oath to Christ which he could not betray.

In the account of Maximilian there is no evidence of an official persecution of Christians in the army. Maximilian's refusal of induction started the train of events leading to his execution. Dio's statements indicate that it did not concern him in the least that Maximilian was a Christian as long as he obeyed orders; Dio even went to the point of arguing to get Maximilian into the service. Moreover, the execution can be explained on the basis of Roman military law; there is no need to posit a persecution to explain it. The 'Digest' specifies the penalty of death for anyone who insults a provincial governor²⁶⁹. The sentence of death passed on Maximilian mentions indicating that Dio was thinking about the official crime of *contumacia*.

In passing, we should discuss briefly another prominent explanation of the 'cluster' of military martyrdoms during the reign of Diocletian — that of E. C. BABUT²⁷⁰. His argument is based on Diocletian's inauguration of the cult of *adoratio*, originally Persian. In the presence of the emperor a person was expected to genuflect and to kiss the emperor's robe²⁷¹. The cult produced an aura around the person of the emperor, perhaps necessary in view

²⁶⁸ W. SESTON, *Dioclétien et la tétrarchie*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, CLXII (Paris, 1946), pp. 210—230. Not only are there problems connected with SESTON's interpretation of the events causing the conflicts with Christian soldiers, but his view on how Diocletian and Maximian related to Jove and Hercules is troublesome. It cannot be imagined that Diocletian considered himself divine only while he was in office (SESTON recognizes that there is no evidence that he did not consider himself divine while he was a general). How is it possible for an individual to create a god? SESTON said that these Augusti considered themselves gods. NORMAN BAYNES, *Review of W. SESTON, Dioclétien et la tétrarchie*, Vol. I, JRS, XXXVIII (1948), 109—113, especially p. 111.

²⁶⁹ Digest XLIX, 16, 6 (2): *Contumacia omnis adversus ducem vel praesidem militis capite punienda est.*

²⁷⁰ E. C. BABUT, *L'adoration des empereurs et les origines de la persécution de Dioclétien*, *Revue Historique*, IV (1916), 225—252.

²⁷¹ O. SEECK, *Adoratio*, in: RE, I, 1 (1893) 400—401.

of the high attrition rate of third century emperors, few of whom died in bed. DELEHAYE, however, understands the cult as only a feature of court etiquette²⁷². Whatever the precise role the cult played in the palace of the emperor, we know of no incident when any Christian was in the presence of the emperor and refused to grant him the specified liturgical respect. Moreover, the cult continued during the reign of Constantine, but there is no indication that it caused any Christian problems in relating to him.

5. Marcellus — The Centurion

The acts of Marcellus take us to the provinces of Spain and Mauretania Tingitana three years later²⁷³. On July 21, 298, at a festival dedicated to the anniversary of Diocletian's and Maximian's assumption of divinity, Marcellus declared that he would no longer serve in the army²⁷⁴. We would know very little about the nature of the festival which occasioned his rejection of the service were it not for the discovery of the 'Feriale Duranum', a calendar of military festivals dating from approximately seventy-five years earlier. From it we learn that important civil religious observances of the empire were listed for observation in the army as well. Therefore, the festival of the anniversary of the emperor's assumption of divinity, although unrelated to the military as such, probably was observed in the camps. Again, the *signa* appear to have been used at every celebration. The object of a cult, the *signa* (eagles and *vexilla*) of a legion were taken out of storage in their sacred repositories and were carried on parade. When Marcellus rejected the service, he did so by throwing away his military girdle, sword belt, and vine switch in front of the *signa* of the legion, according to the account²⁷⁵.

²⁷² H. DELEHAYE, La persécution dans l'armée sous Dioclétien, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques (Académie Royale de Belgique), 1921, pp. 150—166, p. 161.

²⁷³ KRÜGER—RUHBACH, pp. 87—89. MUSURILLO, pp. 250—259.

²⁷⁴ The consulship of Faustus is mentioned; he was consul in 298. The date of the celebration is given in the text as the *die duodecimo kalendarum Augustarum*. Concerning the nature of the festival, Mamertinus' Panegyricus (XI) about Maximian speaks of a *geminus natalis*, obviously describing a celebration other than that of their natural birthdays. The same panegyric tells of "two days of birth which were created by you." (2, 2) Some manuscripts of the account speak of the festival of "your emperors". E. GALLETIER used this account of Marcellus to assign this festival to July 21. See E. GALLETIER, Panégyriques latins (Paris, 1949), I, 9—11. The nature of the festival was a celebration of their simultaneous assumption of divinity. Moreover, this festival is an example of the unity Diocletian wished to create between himself and his fellow Augustus; another impression of unity that Diocletian created was in the evening out of the discrepancy between their tributary years, two years different at the beginning of their reigns, but even at the end.

²⁷⁵ Named in the account were the parts of the uniform which he cast off: the *cingulum*, the belt around the waist holding down a tunic; the *balteum*, sword belt — losing it meant being disarmed; the *vitis*, a vine switch — part of the centurion's insignia. The switch had powerful symbolic value; the centurion used it to beat wayward enlisted men. If a legionnaire resisted being beaten by it, he had to change his branch of service, and if he deliberately broke it, he was to suffer death. See Digest XLIX, 16, 13 (4). Tacitus tells

Since centurions, the backbone of army discipline, rarely behaved this way, the soldiers were aghast. A *centurio ordinarius*, Marcellus commanded one of the centuries in the lower-numbered cohorts (II—X) of the legion and not in the first cohort, a unit reserved for equestrians who started their careers as centurions, ranking as centurion *primus pilus* or *primi ordinis*. It would seem that Marcellus' rank implies that he got where he was, like Marinus, by hard work and ability. Referring to the worship of the standards of the legion as a worship of wooden and stone gods, Marcellus undoubtedly disturbed the morale of the legion, particularly that of his own century. In view of his speech, the judge who examined him interpreted the outrage as a rejection of the military oath.

Although the 'Acts of Marcellus' have more manuscripts surviving than any other military martyrdom, the details regarding the place of trial do not agree in all of them. DELEHAYE has classified them, rendering their use easier but still not simple²⁷⁶. The key to sifting out the erroneous details from these readings is to understand the provincial reorganization of Diocletian, since the trial proceeds according to the hierarchy of courts in the diocese of Hispania (Spain). Arrested during the festival, Marcellus spent seven days in jail and then appeared before Fortunatus, the *praeses* of the province Gallaecia, the Northwest province of the diocese of Hispania, which contained five other provinces, among them Mauretania Tingitana²⁷⁷. In his reorganization of the empire, Diocletian had grouped provinces together in a larger administrative unit, the diocese. The *praefectus praetorii* Agricola at this time may have been at Tingis in Mauretania Tingitana, directly across the Mediterranean from Gibraltar. Since Marcellus was a centurion from the *legio VII Gemina* we can be sure that his first trial was in Gallaecia, where the legion was stationed²⁷⁸. And since Diocletian had not yet divided the civil and military authority in that province, Marcellus must have appeared before a military court²⁷⁹.

At the first trial Fortunatus began by asking why Marcellus broke military discipline by throwing away his girdle, sword and vine switch. Like

the story of a centurion whose nickname was *cedo alteram* because he would break his switch on a soldier and ask for another one (Annals I, 23).

²⁷⁶ H. DELEHAYE, *Les Actes de S. Marcel le centurion*, *Analecta Bollandiana* (hereafter cited AB), XLII (1923), 257—287.

²⁷⁷ Fortunatus (some manuscripts call him Manilius Fortunatus) was the *praeses*, or governor, of the province. The 'M' group of manuscripts have the entire affair from arrest to execution. The 'N' group shows Marcellus going from this province to Tingis in Mauretania for his second trial and execution.

²⁷⁸ RITTERLING, *Legio*, in: RE, XII, 2 (1925), 1491. HARNACK (*Militia Christi*, p. 85) states that Marcellus was from the *legio II Traiana*, usually stationed in Egypt; his evidence is only one of the fifteen surviving manuscripts of the 'Acts of Marcellus', outside of which there is no evidence for the presence of that legion in Spain.

²⁷⁹ When the authority was divided, the military authority was given to a *dux*; *praeses* could mean either governor, proconsul or legate as it is used in the Digest (I, 18, 1). As such the *praeses* held command over all the forces in his province.

Maximilian, Marcellus responded that he had taken his oath to Christ and could no longer tolerate the presence of the standards. At the end of his patience, Fortunatus sent Marcellus with a record of the court appearance to Aurelius Agricolanus, who held the title *vices agens praefectorum praetorio*, vicar for short. The vicar was the official in charge of the diocese; he was directly responsible to the emperor, and the *praeses* was responsible to the vicar²⁸⁰.

The second trial opened on October 30, 298, in Tingis in the court of Agricolanus; it opened with the reading of the court report of the first trial. Asking if anything in the report was wrong, Agricolanus repeated the same questions to make doubly certain that Marcellus was getting a fair trial. Nothing had changed, so Agricolanus summarized his findings; Marcellus had defiled the *sacramentum* by saying those infuriating things for which the sentence was death by the sword.

As in the case of Maximilian, we find no evidence of any official persecution; in fact, the opposite is true. Marcellus was tried under normal Roman military law; the only abnormality was the leniency which the court took with him, since military commanders had the authority to decide cases and issue sentences on the spot²⁸¹. Marcellus had two trials, and every attempt was made to get to the correct details of his offense. Nor was his Christianity an issue, since he was executed for breaking the *sacramentum*. He could have been tried for other offenses — being out of uniform, especially at a festival, or making contumacious remarks to a governor. But the charge of breaking the sacrament probably covered all these, at least in terms of punishment. This charge had a religious implication as well as a military one²⁸².

The presence of Marcellus in court must have been inspiring because a court secretary, a soldier named Cassianus, stood up at the trial and, imitating Marcellus, threw down his stylus and wax tablet. Startled at first, Agricolanus put him in prison for five weeks, at the end of which he was sentenced and executed on December 7. The 'Acts of Cassianus' have come down to us separately from those of Marcellus; the similarity between the two raises suspicions about the second²⁸³. Nevertheless, without definite evidence for proving that the story of Cassianus is a fraud, we include the account with the story of Marcellus.

Since both the sporadic trials and punishments of the Christian soldiers have been explained in military terms, not religious ones, there was no persecution of the Christians in the army at least before late in the year 298. There are no existing military martyr accounts dated between this time and the year 303 when Diocletian began his systematic persecution of the Church. In that year we have the martyrdom of Dasius and enter a new period in

²⁸⁰ JONES, p. 46.

²⁸¹ C. E. BRAND, *Roman Military Law* (Austin, Texas, 1968), p. 105. WATSON, p. 117 and p. 121.

²⁸² BRAND, pp. 72—73.

²⁸³ KRÜGER—RUHBACH, pp. 89—90.

which the religious policies of Diocletian's persecution of the civilian Church become a problem in the lives of Christians in the army as well.

6. Dasius

Late in November, 303, the soldiers at an army post at Durostorum in the province of Moesia Inferior, diocese of Thracia, were preparing for a celebration of the festival of Saturn²⁸⁴. According to the account of Dasius' martyrdom, the celebration centered about choosing a comrade to be the king of the festival. As such, he had the privilege of doing, with regard to wine, women and song, anything he pleased for thirty days; the catch was that at the end of that time he was expected to sacrifice himself to Saturn. The soldiers elected Dasius to the role of king, but Dasius rejected it, because if he had to die it might as well be as a martyr for Christ²⁸⁵.

The soldiers arrested Dasius and took him to the *praetorium* of Bassus, a legate²⁸⁶. Dasius said that he was a Christian and could not serve in an earthly army. Twice Bassus commanded him to pray to the sacred images of the emperors; twice Dasius refused because he was a Christian. Leniently, Bassus attempted to persuade Dasius, but to no avail; finally Bassus ordered him to be beheaded. He died on November 20, 303²⁸⁷.

²⁸⁴ KRÜGER—RUHBACH, pp. 91—95. MUSURILLO, pp. 272—279.

²⁸⁵ STEFAN WEINSTOCK has described the details of this festival, but has not gone into the relationship between this celebration and the military. STEFAN WEINSTOCK, *Saturnalien und Neujahrsfest in den Märtyrerakten*, in: Mullus, *Festschrift Theodor Klauser, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband I* (Münster, 1964), 391—400.

²⁸⁶ Whether in a mobile camp or walled fort, the *praetorium* was the residence of the commander of the legion, but the term could also be symbolically applied to the residence of a provincial governor. The latter interpretation relates to the case of Dasius, since there had not been any legion commanders with the title *legatus legionis*, a senatorial post, from the time of Gallienus. During the reign of Gallienus the *legati* were replaced with equestrians with the title *praefectus legionis*. PARKER, *History*, p. 179.

An imperial province, Moesia Inferior, had for a period of about two centuries been governed by *legati*; ARTHUR STEIN uses this text to prove that the province was still under the old system of administration and that Bassus was the governor bearing the title of *legatus*. ARTHUR STEIN, *Die Legaten von Moesien*, Diss. Pann. I, 11 (Budapest, 1940), pp. 126—127.

²⁸⁷ At the end of the account the author has added that the martyrdom took place on the twentieth day of November, the day of preparation (Saturday), the fourth hour, the twenty-fourth day of the moon. From this interesting notation it is possible to determine the year in which the martyrdom took place. Since all lunar months were twenty-eight days, except the last which is thirty, we add four to fill out the month in which Dasius died, plus thirty for the last lunar month, plus eight more days to make January 1, a total of six weeks exactly. The year 304 began on a Saturday (THEODOR MOMMSEN, *Chronica Minora*, saec. IV, V, VI, VII [Berlin, 1892], p. 60) and the correction for converting the lunar to the solar new year in 304 was 7, it amounts to seven weeks exactly. Since the account opened with a notation that the martyrdom took place under Diocletian and Maximian, and the only new year which began on a Saturday during their reign was 304, November 20 is the correct date and 303 is the year in which it took place. Our calculations agree with FRANZ CUMONT, *Les actes de S. Dasius*, AB, XVI

Overflowing with hagiographical commonplaces, the narrative of Dasius' martyrdom clearly bears the mark of Christian propagandists aiming at targets both inside and outside the church. Dasius appears to have been an orthodox Christian in terms of the Council of Nicea twenty-two years prior to its sessions: "(he believed) in one undefiled and eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in three names and natures, but in one substance". On the other hand, pagan worshippers of Saturn learn how stupid and insane were their liturgies. Such references demonstrate the bitter literary battle Christians waged against their former persecutors; they now have a foothold from which to call Roman religion superstitious, having come a long way from the time when Trajan used that word on Christians²⁸⁸.

The polemical nature of the account raises the question of whether the material concerning the Saturn festival was inserted into the account as an attempt to tarnish the festival's image or whether it actually was the stone on which Dasius tripped. DELEHAYE took the former point of view and CUMONT took the latter. The most serious objection to the inclusion of the Saturnalia festival in this text is that only in the acts of Dasius does the festival last for thirty days; elsewhere the longest duration is seven days²⁸⁹. In addition, Hadrian had abolished human sacrifice and there were military laws against soldiers wounding or killing each other²⁹⁰. Therefore it is unlikely that any such festival was conducted for thirty days at an army camp. The 'Feriale Duranum' has a lacuna which contemporary editors contend would be the logical place on the calendar for the Saturnalia in the army. Apparently the festival was celebrated in the army, but not for thirty days²⁹¹.

The Saturn festival is an addition to the authentic martyrdom of Dasius, but for our use of this narrative it does not make much difference, since Dasius was executed for refusing to pray to the images of the emperors. Moreover, he was brought to trial as a Christian, and Bassus never mentioned Dasius' failure to play the role of king in the Saturn festival.

Just as religion played a major part in the trial of Dasius, it is the major problem in the encounter Tipasius had with the Roman military authorities.

(1897), 8, note 1. However, he raises the problem whether βασιλευόντων Μαξιμιανού και Διοκλητιανού refers to their being emperors or being consuls (ὑπατεύειν is the usual word used for being a consul), but since 303 is in the list of the five years they were consuls jointly (290, 293, 299, 303, 304), there is no need to answer his question philologically.

CUMONT has also found a sarcophagus which may have been that of Dasius. It bears the following inscription: 'Ἐνταῦθα κατακεῖται ὁ ἅγιος μάρτυρ Δάσιος ἐνέχθεις ἀπὸ Δωροστόλου. As he conjectures, it may have been brought to Italy, where it was found in the Church of San Pellegrino, as a result of the sack of the east in 529. The art on it apparently was the traditional art of the fourth or fifth centuries. FRANZ CUMONT, *Le tombeau de S. Dasius de Durostorum*, AB, XXVII (1908), 369—372.

²⁸⁸ WEINSTOCK, pp. 399—400.

²⁸⁹ ANDREW LANG, *Magic and Religion* (London, 1901), pp. 108—115, especially p. 111.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁹¹ *Feriale Duranum*, pp. 160—162. For the Saturnalia in the army: Tacitus, *Histories* III, 78. (Here the Saturnalia was quietly celebrated.)

7. Tipasius — The Veteran

The account of the martyrdom of Tipasius represents the conflicts he had with the army as taking place at two widely separated times²⁹². The first was the occasion of Maximian's expedition to North Africa to suppress the Quinquegentani, the five tribes who rebelled in 297—298; the second was during the Great Persecution when veterans were recalled, as the martyrdom states it, to help enforce Maximian's (Diocletian's?) edict ordering the destruction of churches and scriptures.

Although not to be found among the place names of that time, the title of the passion states that Tipasius' martyrdom took place in Ticabis. On the basis of similarities in spelling, MONCEAUX suggests Tigava, approximately thirty miles from the Mediterranean in the province of Mauretania Caesariensis²⁹³. Fifty miles further east and on the coast, Tipasa is also a good candidate because of its close similarity with the name of the martyr²⁹⁴. At any rate, we can be certain that this province and locality was the scene of the events because Tipasius was taken to Claudius, the *dux* of the province of Caesariensis, meaning Mauretania Caesariensis. Moreover, the discharge granted Tipasius was issued in Sitifensis, immediately east of Mauretania Caesariensis. No doubt the writer of the account referred to these provinces as Caesariensis and Sitifensis because in that locality it would be understood that their correct titles were Mauretania Caesariensis and Mauretania Sitifensis. The writer, therefore, was probably from that immediate area himself.

After his discharge from the army, Tipasius became an ascetic, but when Maximian needed additional manpower to combat the Quinquegentani (297—298)²⁹⁵, Tipasius and other veterans were recalled to service. Several days before the battle Maximian distributed a donative which Tipasius refused to accept because he said he was a Christian. Informed by the angel Gabriel that Maximian would accomplish spectacular victories in the next forty days, Tipasius passed this information on to him. While Tipasius spent the next forty days in jail, Maximian routed the five tribes. The emperor returned to free Tipasius, publicly congratulate him and grant him another discharge allowing him to return to his former ascetic existence.

²⁹² CAROLUS SMEDT, ed., *Passiones tres Martyrum Africanorum, SS. Maximae, Donatillae et Secundae, S. Typasii Veterani, et S. Fabii Vexilliferi*, AB, XI (1890), 107—134.

²⁹³ PAUL MONCEAUX, *Etude critique sur la Passio Tipasii Veterani*, Revue Archéologique, IV (1904), 267—274.

²⁹⁴ If the basis for this argument sounds attenuated, it must be remembered that, in hagiographical writing, authors were not concerned with exact details. By way of illustration, various manuscripts of the Acts of Marcellus give the name of the judge as Manilius Fortunatus, Astasianus Fortunatus, Astisianus Fortunatus, or Astasius Fortunatus. Marcellus' home town is said to be Astasianus, but no town of that name is to be found in Gallaecia; there is one named Asturica (CIL, II, 2633). H. DELEHAYE, *Les actes de S. Marcel le Centurion*, AB, XLII (1923), 257—287.

²⁹⁵ ILS, 645.

In 303 the call again went out for veterans to assist in enforcing the edict of persecution²⁹⁶. Tipasius refused to leave his place of solitude and was arrested. Taken before Claudius the *dux*, Tipasius refused to sacrifice to the gods and refused to be armed, giving as a reason that he was a soldier of Christ²⁹⁷. When the weapons were thrust into his hands, they mysteriously broke. After the execution of Tipasius, dated January 13, probably in the year 304, divine vengeance overtook his persecutors.

In the story of Tipasius there are two series of events which are doubles of each other: two discharges, two ascetic periods, two calls for veterans, two arrests, and two imprisonments, as MONCEAUX points out²⁹⁸. He concludes that the first series of events is history and the second is fable. Despite the impression that the document has been considerably embellished, it seems that MONCEAUX has been too hasty in rejecting the events of 303—304. Even though both series of events are amplified, it is the first series which should be rejected. If the date of the martyrdom is January 304, which we have no reason to question, the first events take place six years before the martyrdom, a very long time. Moreover, there is no tangible connection between Maximian the Augustus and Claudius the governor regarding the case of Tipasius. Probably the reference to Maximian was made in order to connect Christianity with the victory over the Quinquegentani in the same way that Christian apologists claimed the victory of Marcus Aurelius over the Quadi. It is doubtful whether Maximian would have spent the time with Tipasius which our text shows. Given the cult of *adoratio*, introduced in order to keep the emperor inaccessible, it is even less likely that Tipasius met the emperor; Diocletian too was rarely seen in public²⁹⁹. Of course, the load of administrative duties alone would have prohibited any conversation between the emperor and Tipasius³⁰⁰.

²⁹⁶ The 'Acts of Tipasius' present a picture of the Great Persecution which closely agrees with some aspects of it described in Eusebius' 'Church History'. From Eusebius we learn that just before lent in 303, Diocletian put out an edict ordering the destruction of churches and the burning of Scriptures (HE VIII, 2, 4). Obviously, Diocletian could not have put his plans into effect without the support of an army; in some parts of the empire the persecution was so systematic as to require the soldiers to go through the census house by house, making certain nobody escaped. In the 'Martyrs of Palestine' (4, 8), this job is carried out by tribunes and centurions.

²⁹⁷ Elsewhere in the text Claudius is called *comes*. This title does not necessarily exclude that of *dux*, since during the reign of Diocletian it was largely honorary. See H. M. D. PARKER, *Comites*, in: Oxford Classical Dictionary, ed. N. G. L. HAMMOND and H. H. SCULLARD, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970) (hereafter cited as OCD), p. 272.

²⁹⁸ MONCEAUX, p. 270.

²⁹⁹ PARKER, *History*, p. 262. STEWART OOST shows that even a slave could become so burdened down with imperial bureaucratic details as to have to communicate primarily through gestures; there was no time even for talking. STEWART OOST, *The Career of M. Antonius Pallas*, *American Journal of Philology*, LXXIX (1958), 113—139, especially pp. 135—137.

³⁰⁰ Although the portion of Tipasius' story which includes the rejection of the donative is by far the most questionable, we may still study it with respect to the theory of SESTON. Donatives usually were presented in the form of special coins with the emperor's likeness and propaganda struck on them. However, Tipasius rejected not only the donative but also the entire military.

Turning now to the second part of the account, Tipasius, arrested by Doncius, a *praepositus*, and Lucius, a *decurio*, appeared before Claudius the *dux*³⁰¹. In the presence of Claudius they explained that Tipasius used to serve in their *vexillatio*, but had received his discharge in the province of Sitifensis. Since Tipasius had received the *honesta missio* (honorable discharge) it is certain that he had completed his military career without accumulating a bad record for any reason. However, Tipasius no longer appeared to be such a good soldier; the charge brought against him was that he refused both to do military service and to sacrifice to the gods (*diis immolet*), actually, to burn incense to them. Tipasius said that he was a veteran and had previously served in a secular army; now, however, he was a soldier of Christ. Claudius threatened to throw him to the beasts as a deserter³⁰². Although Tipasius thought that he should not be re-enlisted because he was a discharged veteran, Claudius replied that the emperor could change the regulations any time he pleased. After rejecting one last order to sacrifice, Claudius sentenced Tipasius to be beheaded for rejecting the command to return to the service and for refusing to sacrifice. As in the affair of Julius the veteran (below), there is evidence for claiming that an imperial order was issued to the service at this time demanding that the soldiers sacrifice. Claudius demanded Tipasius to sacrifice just as it was commanded (*sicut praeceptum est*).

8. Julius — The Veteran

In the Acts of Julius³⁰³ there are two indications of the date of his martyrdom. The account mentions that it took place "in a time of persecution" and that Julius did not want to receive the *decennalia pecunia*, a donative presented to the soldiers in connection with an anniversary of an emperor's ten years in office. Diocletian and Maximian celebrated their *decennalia* in 294, not "a time of persecution". However, Galerius and Constantius celebrated theirs jointly in 303, a time of persecution³⁰⁴. Therefore the martyrdom of Julius took place in the year 303.

³⁰¹ In this case the title *praepositus* refers to the official in charge of a detachment of veterans, probably living together in a settlement (MACMULLEN, *Soldier*, p. 64). *Decurio* in this account probably refers to the commander of a detachment (*turma*) of cavalry troops. See ALFRED NEUMANN, *Decurio*, in: *Der Kleine Pauly* I, 1417—1420. The implication of these terms suggests that, while Tipasius was a veteran, he lived in a community of veterans and that he was still available for military duty. Moreover, this suggests that, since he was regarded as remaining in the Roman military and subject to its discipline, his Christianity would concern his superiors. And because he was enrolled in a *vexillatio*, a unit comprising veterans, Tipasius' life may not have been as ascetic as the author would like us to believe. See H. M. D. PARKER, *The Roman Legions*, p. 164.

³⁰² According to Roman law, Claudius was technically out of bounds in issuing such a threat; only soldiers who had deserted to the enemy were liable to be thrown to the beasts. *Digest* XLIX, 16, 3 (10).

³⁰³ KRÜGER—RUHBACH, pp. 105—106. MUSURILLO, pp. 260—265

³⁰⁴ H. MATTINGLY, *The Imperial 'Vota'*, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXXVI (1950), 175.

Although HARNACK placed the location of Julius' death in Durostorum, it could not have happened there³⁰⁵. In the Martyrdom of Dasius, definitely placed in Durostorum, the judge was titled a *legatus*, indicating that Diocletian had not reformed that province by 303, the same year as the death of Julius. However, Julius was tried before a *praeses*, but since we have shown in the case of Dasius that the legate, Bassus, was a civil official (the *legatus legionis* as a title had ceased to exist thirty years previously)³⁰⁶, there could not have been two systems of civil authority in the same year in the same town. Both Bassus and Maximus were governors; Dasius appeared before Bassus and Julius appeared before Maximus. Therefore, Julius did not die in Durostorum.

There is no way of telling how Julius got into trouble; as a prisoner he is brought before Maximus, the *praeses*. Julius' captor told Maximus that Julius was a Christian and did not obey the laws, a charge to which Julius pleaded guilty, saying that he could not do otherwise. Maximus asked him if he had ignored the laws ordering sacrifice to the gods; Julius said he had not ignored the laws, he just could not obey them.

The remainder of the account gives clear impressions of what each man's position was. Maximus' concern was that only the form of worship need be observed; what harm was it to burn a little incense and go on one's way³⁰⁷? He even attempted to compel Julius to sacrifice by stratagems. Flattering Julius' serious mind, Maximus appealed to his sense of values, but had no success. He tried to get Julius to sacrifice for a reward and even promised to make it look as though Julius had sacrificed under force so he would not lose face in the eyes of his fellow Christians, all the time promising that he could spend his donative in peace. However, Julius made it clear that he had done his part for Rome since he had served twenty-seven years with a clean record and fought seven times in battle as bravely as any of his comrades — he never hid behind anyone. In comparison with his combat and service record, the demand to sacrifice was only trivial, he thought. Perhaps the sacrificing could be forgotten since he had already done so much for the empire.

Not so. Maximus threatened to cut off Julius' head and at the same time wondered why someone would die for the memory of an executed criminal. Since Maximus would not budge, Julius too had an answer; to give in meant eternal punishment, to hold fast meant eternal reward. Finally Maximus

³⁰⁵ ADOLF HARNACK, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1893—1904), II, 2, 477. HARNACK gives no proof here, but what he probably had in mind was the reference to the martyr Isichius' birth in Durostorum. See H. DELEHAYE, *Saints de Thrace et de Mesie*, AB, XXXI (1912) 269. At the end of the account of Julius' martyrdom is the story of Isichius, a soldier killed several days later, who came to encourage Julius on his way to martyrdom. The fact that Isichius was born in Durostorum and visited Julius at the time of his death is insufficient evidence to place the trial of Julius there.

³⁰⁶ H. M. D. PARKER and G. R. WATSON, *Legion*, in: OCD, p. 591.

³⁰⁷ From the Dura papyri we learn that part of the reception of a donative was to burn an incense offering, a *turificatio*, to the emperor, Feriale Duranum, p. 201.

pronounced the death sentence because Julius had refused to obey the "imperial precepts"³⁰⁸. Concerning the "imperial precepts" no exact conclusion can be drawn. Perhaps one might argue that what is meant is the incense offering customarily performed on receipt of a donative, but it is difficult to construe a traditional cultic act as a precept. It is more likely that a new severe restriction had been placed on the soldiers in the army to test their religious convictions. Such restrictions would be consistent with the religious policy of Diocletian. Since the command to sacrifice is so prominent in this account, it seems likely that a command to sacrifice had again gone out to the army as before, the liver reading event, to which we will now turn our attention.

9. Persecution in the Army Before 303

Before the reign of Diocletian, if we are to judge by the existing accounts of martyrdoms, Christian soldiers in the army had no problems traceable to any imperial policy of discrimination. As we have seen, soldiers before Diocletian either confronted the Roman army religious policies on their own initiative, or, as in the case of Marinus, were involved in trials of local scope, dealing with issues arising individually. The first indication that any imperial attention was given to Christians in the ranks is in the account of divining the future by reading livers, Diocletian was offended when Christians present at one of these rites made the sign of the cross on their foreheads³¹⁰. As the augurs claimed, the effect of the Christians' presence was that the spirits were frightened away and, after several repetitions of the rite, no sign was forthcoming in the livers. Diocletian responded by mandating everyone in the place to sacrifice, those refusing to be scourged. Simultaneously he sent letters to all commanders of the legions that any soldier who did not sacrifice was to be dismissed from the military. Such measures were stern but not fatal. A soldier dismissed dishonorably would lose his pension, his savings in the regimental bank, and the social status of having completed a military career³¹¹. The date when this action took place is not certain. Indicating that he is relating these events in chronological order, Lactantius states that "an interval of some time", at least a year, lay between the liver reading failure and Galerius' successful attempt to get Diocletian to conduct an empire-wide persecution of the Christians³¹².

³⁰⁸ *Praecepta regum*.

³⁰⁹ On the Deaths of the Persecutors 10.

³¹⁰ Hippolytus recommends that Christians seal their foreheads with the "sign of the passion" as a defense against the devil. Whether this was the sign of the cross or not is not entirely clear, but his reference to the 'passion' seems to indicate this. The Apostolic Tradition III, 38. 1.

³¹¹ WATSON, *The Roman Soldier*, pp. 122—123.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 11. The beginning of this persecution was the festival of Terminalia, February 23, 303.

When we add to Lactantius the account in book eight of Eusebius' 'Church History', the relationship between the liver incident and the Great Persecution is made more confusing, both chronologically and causally. Though Eusebius did not give an exact date, he said that the persecution did not start all at once everywhere but began in the army. However, it is certain that Eusebius and Lactantius were speaking about the same incident since they both mention that either dismissal or loss of rank, but not bloodshed, was the penalty for failure to sacrifice³¹³. Eusebius gives the impression that the affairs in the army were closer in time to the Great Persecution than did Lactantius. Since Eusebius credits a "camp commander" with beginning the persecution, his grasp of the details involving the army is suspect³¹⁴. Rarely was he specific and when he was he made mistakes.

The policy of Diocletian evidently had the intended effect because many Christians left the army rather than be involved in this religious conflict³¹⁵, but we cannot be sure what Eusebius means by "many". However, the persecution was intended to be widespread; when Diocletian planned it, he sought the advice of several high ranking military men so as not to be solely implicated in its evil outcome, as Lactantius interpreted it³¹⁶.

Once the Great Persecution was underway, however, Eusebius and Lactantius had nothing more to tell us concerning the relationship between the army and Christian soldiers. But Lactantius may throw some light on the persecution in the military by what he said concerning the general character of the persecution³¹⁷. Everybody was compelled to sacrifice. In the courts, before any case could be heard, the litigants had to burn an incense offering. In the opinion of Lactantius, this practice made the judges appear to be deities.

When we arrive at the year 303 our chief source of information is the martyr acts. We can deduce a limited amount of data from them, but it is almost impossible to go beyond the conclusions which we have already drawn. There remains one other source of evidence, inscriptions, but they range from the beginning of the third century up to the fifth, some beyond. Because of their nature, they do not add much, with one outstanding exception, to the discussion concerning the relationship between Christians and the Roman government.

³¹³ HE VIII, 4, 2. On the Deaths 10.

³¹⁴ HE VIII, 4, 3. The word Eusebius used was στρατοπεδάρχης meaning the camp commandant; but it is not likely that such a person would have been able to conduct persecution on as large a scale as Eusebius said he did. In Eusebius' 'Chronicle' for the year 301 Jerome used the term *magister militiae*, indicating that he too was troubled by having the persecution attributed to the camp commander. The *magister militiae* is a post-Constantinian title, and a person carrying it would have had the power necessary to do what Eusebius said that the στρατοπεδάρχης had done. H. KROMAYER and G. VEITH, *Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer* (Munich, 1928), p. 582. ALEXANDER DEMANDT, *Magister Militum*, in: RE suppl. XII (1970), pp. 553—790. See p. 560.

³¹⁵ HE VIII, 4, 2.

³¹⁶ On the Deaths 11.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

10. Inscriptions

Christian inscriptions, all from tombstones, tell us, as do other sources, that there were Christians in the ranks of the Roman army. Like most tombstone inscriptions from the lower classes of society, those of Christians are usually quite brief, since they do not list the various offices which equestrians or senatorial men would have held in the *cursus honorum*. To have an epitaph list a large amount of information would have been expensive and, in some Christian cases before the time of Constantine, dangerously ostentatious. The number of surviving inscriptions which are of Christian military men are in the hundreds, indicating that many Christians had served in the Roman army at one time or another. However, the number of those soldiers serving before Constantine is more difficult to determine since the format of the inscription usually included only the name of the deceased, the survivor erecting the monument, the rank of the deceased, and sometimes the legion in which he served. Occasionally the name of an emperor or consul is mentioned, permitting the determination of the dates of death and military service. Unfortunately, we are not able to list any exact number of Christians who served before Constantine, but it is likely that some of those undatable inscriptions are from that period.

To the collections of LECLERCQ and DIEHL we have added our own research, bringing their work up to date³¹⁸. Since it would be pointless to deal with all the inscriptions here, we refer the reader to these collections for his own summary. In the list of LECLERCQ (DIEHL is more comprehensive generally but not regarding the pre-Constantinian inscriptions), seven soldiers are definitely before the time of Constantine, of these one (no. 29) is second century, and six (nos. 12, 21, 22, 24, 46, and 47) are third century. In these inscriptions we find one *centurio* (12), two *evocati* (21, 22), one *beneficiarius* (24), two veterans (29, 46), and one listed as *militavit* (served as a soldier — 47). Of these, five inscriptions were found in Rome, and one of these served in the *legio II Parthica Severiana* raised by Septimius Severus for service in the east. The remaining two (12, 29) have no indication where they were found or where the soldiers served. It is interesting to notice that two of these soldiers had been married at a time when the army did not officially permit marriage. In this regard they seem to have made their arrangements like other Roman soldiers³¹⁹. In addition to the list of LECLERCQ, we know of an *evocatus* who was buried at the time of the emperor Philip (246—249). This soldier was a member of *cohors I* of the Praetorian Guards, stationed in Rome³²⁰.

³¹⁸ H. LECLERCQ, *Militarism*, in: *DACL XI*, 1 (1933), pp. 1155—1179. ERNESTUS DIEHL, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* (Berlin, 1925—1931), no. 483—569. *L'année épigraphique* (hereafter cited as *AE*), 1936, no. 49; 1937, no. 144; 1938, no. 138; 1939, no. 171; 1946, nos. 43 and 246; 1950, no. 257.

³¹⁹ MACMULLEN, *Soldier*, p. 126.

³²⁰ *AE* 1939, no. 171.

Uncharacteristic of Roman military inscriptions is the epitaph on the tomb of a Lycaonian bishop³²¹. In it the bishop, Julius Eugenius, described how he had served with distinction in a command under the governor of Pisidia until Maximin Daia ordered all Christians to sacrifice, but did not allow them to leave the service. It was 311 when Maximin renewed the persecution of Christians temporarily brought to a standstill by the deathbed edict of toleration by Galerius. In contrast to the policy of Diocletian who demanded either sacrifice or dismissal from the service, Maximin commanded sacrifice but allowed no Christians to leave, according to this inscription. Bishop Eugenius suffered torments at the hands of the governor and then apparently made an escape³²². Shortly thereafter he became bishop of Laodiceia and rebuilt the church there, probably destroyed during the persecution, remaining bishop for a period of twenty-five years until his death.

What was his military experience like? CALDER wondered if the reason there was no mention of Eugenius' rank was because he had been an officer, since officers were required to lead inferior ranking soldiers in sacrifice. In the case of Marinus we have already seen that such was the case. This line of thought becomes even more intriguing when we notice that Eugenius married the daughter of a Roman senator, implying that he was probably an equestrian or a senator himself. As such, he would never have begun military duty as an enlisted man, but as a centurion of the first cohort, the first step in his *cursus honorum*. Moreover, on his tombstone he said that he escaped from the service or, in military terms, deserted. It would seem, therefore, that Eugenius was proud to have been in the service but not proud to have been identified as an officer. We cannot be certain of the exact date of this epitaph, but adding twenty-five years to the time he was a soldier under Maximin (309—313), we arrive at a date of around 335 at the earliest, close to the time of Constantine's death. By this time the enemies of Constantine had long been in their graves, but the rhetoric concerning them had not. To say that one had served would come almost naturally, but it was never politic either in governmental or ecclesiastical circles to have been identified with Maximin as an officer. Constantine was always wary about competition or the reminder of it; the church could remember, as Eusebius helped it to do³²³, how the officers had helped to carry out the persecution under Maximin.

³²¹ W. M. CALDER, A Fourth Century Lycaonian Bishop, *Expositor* (7th Ser.), VI (1908), 385—408.

³²² The epitaph mentions that Diogenes was governor of Pisidia; we know that Valerius Diogenes was *praeses* of Pisidia from CIL, III, 6807. CALDER quotes RAMSAY's argument that this inscription must be dated from 307—311, and that Eugenius' conflict with the military took place around 310. W. M. CALDER, *Studies in Early Christian Epigraphy*, JRS, X (1920), 42—59. CALDER also mentions an inscription composed jointly by Eugenius and Severus, his predecessor as bishop (pp. 47—59). On it, Eugenius is said to have a spiritual belt (ζώνη πνευματική, p. 47), an allusion to the fact that he had exchanged his military belt for a spiritual one.

³²³ The Martyrs of Palestine 4, 8.

Does the epitaph conclusively prove that Eugenius was a soldier? This problem arises from the word *strateuō* which can mean to perform civil service functions as well as to be a soldier, its more common use. However, as RAMSAY MACMULLEN points out, at this time the distinction between civil and military service, despite Diocletian's attempt to separate them, was so vague that the roles were almost interchangeable³²⁴. Even clerks wore the *cingulum*, the belt of military service. Moreover, Eugenius made it clear that he had served with distinction, certainly a military expression. At any rate it is clear that Eugenius a military career did not prohibit him from becoming a bishop; he may have had good stories to tell his flock since he maintained the Christian faith under torture.

There is also epigraphical evidence pointing to Christians in the Roman army in Britain. With the possible exception of one inscription, none of the evidence is to be dated with certainty before the time of Constantine³²⁵. Some of the inscriptions are on movable objects such as tableware and jewelry; on them is inscribed either the Chi-Rho monogram or the word *VIVAS*. But as WATSON points out, traces of Christian art on movable objects do not prove much since we do not know how the object might have gotten there or how the owner may have regarded it; it may have been plundered rather than cherished by its last owner. At an early date, whatever Christianity reached Britain came with the army, which would certainly have been more Christian than the surrounding countryside outside the camps³²⁶.

11. The Question of Christian Police

We have now seen most of the evidence for arguing that Christians were present in the Roman army prior to the time of Constantine. As we have presented the evidence, reference was made to the character of their involvement in the military; there can be no doubt that these men were in the Roman army, its legions, vexillations, Praetorian guards, urban cohorts and navy. Historians holding the pacifist point of view have argued that the church permitted Christians to seek employment in the police forces of the empire. The most explicit exponent of this position is ROLAND BAINTON, although C. J. CADOUX speculates about the Christian police, but gives no evidence³²⁷. Where BAINTON discusses the subject of police, the caption is 'Police Function Sanctioned'; since there is no recorded statement of any Christian theologian, or anyone else for that matter, permitting Christians

³²⁴ MACMULLEN, *Soldier*, pp. 49—76, esp. p. 70. Lactantius, p. 31, spoke of soldiers in all branches of government.

³²⁵ G. R. WATSON, *Christianity in the Roman Army in Britain*, in: *Christianity in Britain, 300—700*, M. W. BARLEY and R. P. C. HANSON, eds. (Leicester, 1968), pp. 51—54.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³²⁷ ROLAND BAINTON, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (Nashville, 1960), pp. 79—81. CADOUX, *Attitude*, pp. 15—16.

to become policemen but not soldiers, he cannot and does not produce any such statement³²⁸.

Since BAINTON mentions various positions held by Christians recorded in inscriptions, we will look at each of these instances separately³²⁹. The first is the class of *vigiles*, keepers of the peace and members of the fire brigade in Rome. Although usually confined to these duties, on one instance they were involved in a military conflict; in the year 270 they broke the siege of Autun and plundered the city³³⁰. Even though there is no evidence to date securely any Christian member of the *vigiles* before Constantine, some undated inscriptions may pertain to this period. Next we find mentioned the *beneficiarii* (at least one before Constantine), usually assigned as administrative aides to officers and provincial officials. The fact that a Christian held that rank proves nothing concerning his peacefulness, but rather the opposite, since this rank was in the line of advancement from enlisted soldier to centurion and beyond, if possible³³¹. It is not clear why this rank should be singled out, since it was obviously a military administrative position. The same question might be asked of a group of soldiers called *protectores*; no Christian joined them before Constantine either, if the stones tell the whole story. Despite their benign sounding title, these men were soldiers like any others, some of whom got their military crowns fighting the Germans on the Rhine in the time of Gallienus (260—268)³³². Of those inscriptions listed in LECLERCQ as prior to Constantine (*centurio, evocati, beneficiarius, miles, and veterani*), none have anything to do with police; all are military ranks³³³. Moreover, none of the military martyr acts show that the Christians involved came from any unit other than a military one; frequently it is pointed out that the soldier in question was a good one (cf. Julius and Tipasius).

³²⁸ In an attempt to show the peacefulness of Christians in the Roman military, BAINTON points to Tertullian as mentioning a military job that was free from violent activity — the *frumentarius* (BAINTON, p. 79; Tertullian, *De fuga* 13). To the contrary, the *frumentarii* arrested Christians, beat up the bakers of Antioch, and extorted money during a famine. They were the detested political spies of the empire, and the "record of their activities is not entirely honorable" (MACMULLEN, *Soldier*, p. 51).

³²⁹ All the inscriptions mentioned in BAINTON's argument are found in LECLERCQ, *Militarisme*, in: *DAcL*, XI, 1, (1933) 1155—1179.

³³⁰ PARKER, *History*, p. 188. *CIL*, XII, 2228 = *ILS*, 569.

³³¹ *CIL*, III, 9908 gives the successive ranks of one soldier: *miles legionis XI, tesserarius, beneficiarius, cornicularius legati Augusti pro praetore, centurio*. *CIL*, VIII, 17626 shows a soldier going from the office of *beneficiarius* of the *legio III Augusta* to *centurio* of the *legio II Italica*. Other examples are to be found in A. VON DOMASZEWSKI, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, 2nd ed., rev. by BRIAN DOBSON (Köln, 1967), pp. 32—35.

³³² *CIL*, III, 1836. These soldiers probably got their name by protecting the army against barbarization; they were a special class of Roman soldiers, like American West Pointers. PARKER, *History*, p. 180. That these men were fighters is shown by R. GROSSE, *Römische Militärgeschichte* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 13—15.

³³³ BAINTON in a footnote has listed all the numbers of the inscriptions (see note 122 above) pertaining to the above ranks (12, 21, 22, 24, 29, 47) but chose to discuss only the *beneficiarius* (24) when he developed his theory about Christians being permitted only police work. See BAINTON, p. 69, note 10.

The 'police work interpretation' of Christians' military careers is built on an assumption as problematic as the evidence which supports it. This assumption is that police duties were peaceful and that military duties were violent, or potentially so. The opposite may have been more true. While there is more than a grain of truth to MACMULLEN's quip that a soldier could have spent an entire career without ever having to strike a blow in anger — except in a tavern — life within the empire could be as violent as on its borders. And it is MACMULLEN who has shown that the movement to put down brigands resulted in some very bloody fights; this was part of the police work of the first three centuries and beyond³³⁴. The distinction between civil and military preservation of order is largely a modern, not a Roman one. Acting in various capacities, the soldiers did most of the policing of the empire. Capturing terrorists, investigating criminal activity, finding missing persons, questioning suspects (torture), raiding houses in search of weapons unlawfully possessed, collecting tariffs and tolls, and spying, were the duties which concerned many Roman soldiers acting as police³³⁵. However, there were some civilians who were police officers; Polycarp was arrested by an *eivēnarchos*³³⁶.

12. Recruitment

Insofar as certain historians have attempted to explain the lack of evidence for Christians in the Roman army before 174 by the recruitment policies of the army, we must examine those policies in relationship to Christians³³⁷. Before Caracalla granted citizenship to the entire empire in 212, legions could enlist only freeborn Roman citizens³³⁸. According to this argument, Christians in the first two centuries were largely Jews, slaves and other non-citizens (an unexamined assumption which we will not deal with here) and were therefore not eligible to enlist in the legions. But to say that many Christians were not eligible for enlistment in the legions is both true and misleading, since the auxiliary forces regularly took people from the social classes mentioned³³⁹. Recruitment for these forces drew heavily on provincial people, since the *auxilia* had in Republican times been the means by which Rome acquired her mercenaries. Not only were these forces open to all within the borders of the empire, but there were also attractive incentives to join. The soldier had a job, salary, meals as regular as anywhere

³³⁴ R. MACMULLEN, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), pp. 255—268.

³³⁵ R. W. DAVIES, *Police Work in Roman Times*, *History Today*, XVIII (1968), 700—707.

³³⁶ *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 6.

³³⁷ BIGELMAIR, pp. 176—177. CADOUX, p. 16. BAINTON, p. 68.

³³⁸ How fastidiously this requirement was maintained appears in the Trajan-Pliny correspondence concerning two slaves who concealed their status managing to get as far as the military oath before they were found out. Trajan demanded that they be tried on a capital charge, and if the recruiting officer had been lax, he too was liable to the same punishment. Pliny, *Epistles* X, 29 and 30.

³³⁹ H. M. D. PARKER and G. R. WATSON, *Auxilia*, in: *OCD*, p. 155.

in the empire, as well as the promise of Roman citizenship for himself and his immediate family, a pension, and a plot of land upon discharge³⁴⁰. BIGELMAIR argued that the length of service, twenty-five years, in the auxiliaries would be prohibitive to Christians, but there is no reason why only Christians should be bothered by this regulation³⁴¹.

13. Summary

Although the evidence coming down to us does not permit an estimate of the number of Christian soldiers in the Roman army at any one time, the number must have been significant to the extent that it did not escape notice of Christians and Romans alike. When Tertullian argued that there were Christians in every camp and when he said that there were Christians in the army who were not so courageous as the martyred soldier featured in 'De corona', he was pointing to a situation familiar to him. There must have been enough Christians enlisting to make the appropriation of the *XII Fulminata* story plausible. In the same way, the account of the Theban legion appealed to Christian writers, though it was written much later after the event. If it were not for Romans pointing to the same situation, the evidence from the Christian side would have to be much more critically assessed. The Roman governor told Maximilian that there were Christians in Diocletian's personal army, and Diocletian himself took specific action regarding Christians there. In addition to these Christians we know from martyr acts, there are tombstones of Christian soldiers. The evidence for Christian soldiers indicates that this study concerns a situation more than peripheral to the life of the early church³⁴².

If the presence of Christians in the army was an embarrassment to some leaders in the church, it was not so for the Roman officials until a year or so before the Great Persecution. None of the deaths of soldier martyrs before 303 showed any trace of imperial attention; in each case it was the soldiers themselves who objected to the Roman military religion, in Christian terms, to idolatry. After that date, the martyrdoms of soldiers increase correspondingly with those of civilians. As the number of soldier martyrs increases, the reasons for their martyrdom also change. After 303 the focus of the military

³⁴⁰ WATSON compares the diplomata (the modern word for bronze discs engraved with the conditions and benefits of discharge) before and after the year 140. Before that time the soldier got citizenship for his children, but not for his wife; after that time, the veteran was allowed citizenship only for himself. See Soldier, p. 136. G. L. CHEESMAN lists the benefits for joining the *auxilia*: money, land, pension and citizenship. G. L. CHEESMAN, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army* (Oxford, 1914), pp. 34—35.

³⁴¹ BIGELMAIR, p. 176.

³⁴² CADOUX argued that there must not have been many Christians in Diocletian's army since no emperor readily deprives himself of a tenth or a twentieth of his soldiers. (*Attitude*, p. 243.) If there were even one per cent Christian soldiers in Diocletian's army, that would be a large number. Of course, CADOUX's argument is theoretical since Diocletian probably had no idea how many Christians there were in his ranks.